Chapter 2 **The Hajj before Muhammad** Journeys to Mecca in Muslim Narratives of Pre-Islamic History

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The Hajj poses intriguing historical questions to students of Islam. Most quintessential Islamic icons, such as the Qur'an, ritual prayer and the Ramadan fast are closely associated with Muhammad's prophetic mission, but the Hajj is explicitly ascribed a much more ancient history. Although Muslim and non-Muslim scholars disagree over its precise antiquity, there is consensus that Muhammad embraced a pre-existing Hajj ritual. Several western scholars have studied this 'pre-Islamic Hajj' to explore what they believe to be Islam's syncretism, and they contend that Muhammad's Hajj incorporated rituals from Arabian paganism, litholatry (stone worship) and even Judaism.[1] Muslims, on the other hand, maintain that the Hajj was originally a divinely inspired monotheistic practice for the worship of Allah, which was gradually corrupted by Arabian polytheists, but then restored by Muhammad to its original intention and correct monotheistic significance.

The two camps of scholars make divergent arguments, but they are united by a common objective of proving the 'true history' of the 'actual' pre-Islamic Hajj. Their work, however, is confronted by evidential problems. The Muslim account relies on an oral tradition purportedly explaining all details of the ancient origin of Hajj, but this tradition only survives in sources from the Islamic era and lacks both corroboration from pre-Islamic texts and archaeological substantiation. Western academic theories for their part pose interesting questions and highlight inconsistencies in the Muslim tradition, but they too lack the textual and archaeological evidence necessary to establish cogent alternatives.

The debate continues, but the factual origins of Hajj are buried deep in time, and as a practical matter, the only ready evidence of the early history of Hajj are Arabic narratives written in the Islamic period. These texts cannot take us back to the primordial origins of the Hajj, but they can be dated with some precision, and they do provide a record of how early generations of Muslims understood the origins of Hajj.

In this essay, I shall analyse the Arabic accounts as narratives to decipher the layers of discourses in the early Islamic period which contributed to the development of a canonical account of the history of Hajj. I shall then apply the results of this analysis to explore how the Hajj stories affected the ways in which Muslim writers narrated the pre-Islamic history of Arabia.

My exploration of the Muslim portrayal of the history of Hajj starts at first principles with two related questions: first, when does the Muslim 'tradition' believe the first Hajj was performed; and second, precisely what texts constitute this 'tradition'? Identifying texts is relatively straightforward, but they reveal complex discourses surrounding the history of Hajj.

Chronologically, the relevant texts fall into two groups: the first consists of texts from the very first generations of Islam, namely the Qur'an and, to varying degrees, the *Hadith* (most attributed to the Prophet himself and at first primarily transmitted orally and then increasingly recorded in writing from the eighth century);[2] and the second group consists of histories, Qur'anic commentaries, geographies and other scholarly books written some 200 to 350 years

after Muhammad's death by Arabic writers in Iraq.[3] The later texts interpreted and expanded upon the older material and produced the canonical version of the Muslim tradition, but they do not always dovetail neatly with the narratives of the Qur'an and *Hadith*. There are fissures and discrepancies between the two, and these are fruitful sites for investigating how Muslim scholars in the first centuries of Islam developed variant interpretations and even new accounts of history. The story of the Hajj is one such example.

Regarding the question of the first Hajj in history, the later texts, particularly those written since the tenth century, assert that Adam, the first man, was the first *hajji*.[4] This has become well established in the Muslim tradition; however, early texts make a very different claim. We shall begin with the earliest sources and chronologically trace the evolving history of the first Hajj.

The first Hajj (1): the Qur'an and the *Hadith*

Our earliest source is the Qur'an. It makes several references to the Hajj and the Ka'ba's construction in verses which invariably revolve around the figure of the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his community of monotheists identified by the adjective *hanif* (of pure faith/upright religion). The Qur'an portrays Ibrahim as the prophet whom God guided to the holy site of Mecca (Q.22:26); the builder of *al-bayt* (the house i.e. the Ka'ba) (Q.2:127);[5] the first to call mankind to perform the Hajj (Q.22:27); and the earliest figure to bless Mecca as a holy place (Q.2:126) (**Pls 1**, **2**). Ibrahim is also described as a God-appointed imam (Q.2:124), and in the following verse, the Qur'an specifies the sanctity of *al-bayt* and Maqam Ibrahim (the 'standing place' of Ibrahim) which Muslims are instructed to take as a place of prayer.

The Qur'an also describes Mecca as the 'first house [*bayt*] [of worship] to be established for people (Q.3:96).[6] In isolation, this verse could appear to bestow deep primordial roots on Mecca, but in the verse's context (Q:3:95–7), the connection with the Hajj and Ibrahim is palpable. Verse 95 urges readers to 'follow Ibrahim's religion' (described as *hanif*), and verse 97 orders mankind to perform the Hajj, here mentioning Maqam Ibrahim (Q.3:95–7). The Qur'an's historical horizon of the Hajj is firmly fixed on Ibrahim with no reference to Adam (**Pl. 1**).

The second group of extant early texts are the Prophetic *Hadith*, the corpus of reported sayings and acts of Muhammad. Against the background of controversy surrounding the *Hadith*'s authenticity,[7] I survey those individual *hadith*s which the Muslim tradition cherishes as the most authentic: the *hadith*s preserved in the six canonical collections (*al-Kutub al-sitta*) and in Ahmad ibn Hanbal's more voluminous *Musnad*. As a group, these *hadith*s plainly corroborate the Qur'an's discourse, which evidences their coherence and likely antiquity. Taken together with the Qur'an, they elaborate upon what appears to be a genuinely early conception of the origins of Hajj.

The Hajj, its rituals (*manasik*) and holy places (*masha'ir*) are described as *irth Ibrahim* (the legacy of Ibrahim),[8] mirroring the Qur'anic depiction of Ibrahim as the original imam of the Hajj. The foundations of the Ka'ba are described in the *Hadith* as *qawa'id Ibrahim* (the foundations of Ibrahim),[9] again echoing the Qur'anic description of Ibrahim's construction

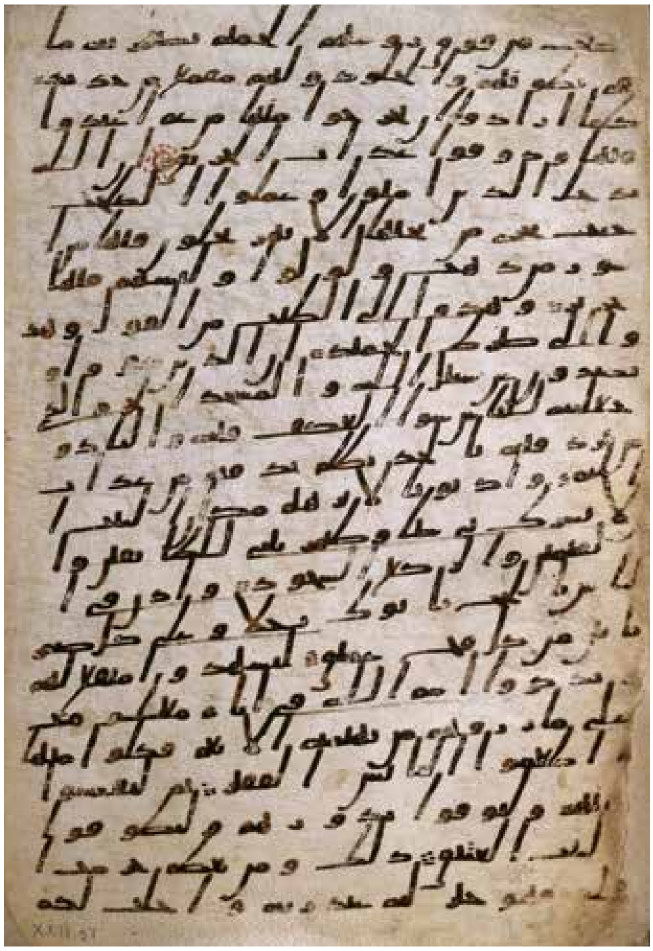


Plate 1 Qur'an, Arabia, *c.* 8th century. British Library, London (Or 2156, f.59b). Lines 13–17 record Qur'an 22:26–7, describing God's command to Ibrahim to inaugurate the Hajj. This may be the oldest surviving document referring to the Abrahamic narratives of Hajj origins (© The British Library Board)

of *al-bayt*. The *Hadith* cites ritual locations such as the well of Zamzam, Safa and Marwa and the original construction of the Ka'ba in narratives about Ibrahim's original settlement of Mecca with his son Isma'il (Ishmael).[10] Some *hadith*s even report that pictures of Ibrahim and Isma'il were painted on the walls of the Ka'ba in pre-Islamic times.[11] The special connection between Mecca and Ibrahim is also reinforced through the notion that Mecca's status as a holy sanctuary (*haram*) was ordained by God 'via the tongue of Ibrahim'.[12] The importance of Hajj as an act of monotheistic worship is thus portrayed in both the Qur'an and *Hadith* as being inspired by God, but mediated through the person of the prophet Ibrahim (**Pl. 2**).

We here encounter a model in which the early Muslim community portrays holy sanctuaries as connected with the founding person of their prophets. This model, and further emphasis on the Abrahamic origins of Mecca, appears in *hadith*s regarding Muhammad's settlement of Medina after the *Hijra*. Muhammad is said to have declared that 'each prophet has a sanctuary (*haram*), and my *haram* is Medina'.[13] The *hadith*s describing Muhammad's settlement of Medina also expressly compare the two prophets' establishment of holy sanctuaries; Muhammad was reported to say, 'I sanctify (*uharrimu*) that which lies between [Medina's] two stony plains (*labatayha*), just as Ibrahim sanctified (*harrama*)

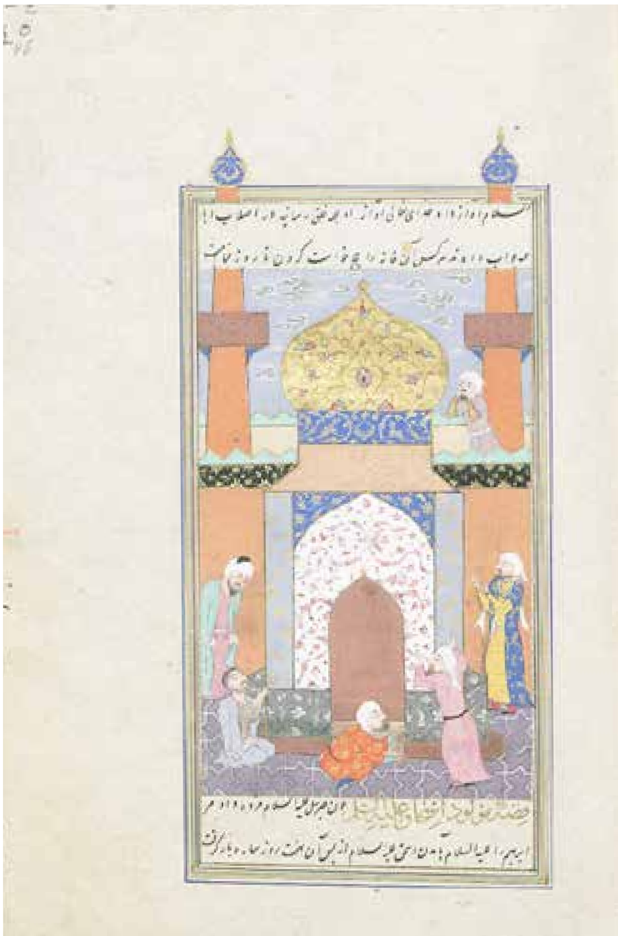


Plate 2 Ishmael and his father Abraham pray after building the Ka'ba. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (Diez A fol. 3, f. 46r)

Mecca'.[14] The specifically Abrahamic connection of Mecca's holy sites and the Hajj ritual are thus embedded in a construction whereby Ibrahim, divinely inspired, represents the foundation of Mecca's sanctity.

The model in which sacred geography and ritual sites are perceived as the personal property of holy men was noted in southern Arabia during the early 20th century.[15] Whether the desert sanctuaries encountered by European researchers are the distant descendants of the belief in the prophetic origins of both Mecca and Medina is a matter for separate consideration, but for our purposes, the specific emphasis placed on Ibrahim's connection to Mecca and the Hajj in both the Qur'an and the *Hadith* and the continuation of the Hajj in Islam with its distinctly Abrahamic connections are readily explainable if we understand that, around Muhammad's time, shrines were perceived as the holy space of specific prophets. The narratives support an interpretation that Mecca was perceived as Ibrahim's special sanctum and the Hajj as his personal legacy to monotheism. Muhammad accepted Ibrahim as a major prophet,[16] and upon triumphing in Mecca, Muhammad was in a position to restore Ibrahim's rites and resurrect monotheism in the sanctuary of Ibrahim.

Mecca's sanctity is occasionally described without reference to Ibrahim, whereby some *hadith*s state 'Mecca was sanctified by God',[17] and call the Ka'ba the 'House of God' (*bayt Allah*).[18] With one exception, these statements do not appear in *hadith*s concerned with the history of Mecca, but rather its quality as a hallowed space. And the exception, a reference to the Ka'ba as 'the House of God', occurs in an account of Ibrahim's construction of the sanctuary.[19] The assertion that Mecca's sacredness ultimately derives from God does not affect Ibrahim's historical role as the prophet who invoked this status. These *hadith*s thus indicate that the early Muslims believed Ibrahim to have been intimately involved with the establishment of a ritual site in Mecca, and they provide no evidence that early Muslims believed Adam or any other person made a pilgrimage to Holy Mecca before Ibrahim. As for Adam, the canonical collections of *hadith*s portray him, uncontroversially, as the first man, but are silent on his life after the fall from Paradise. Ahmad ibn Hanbal does record a *hadith* describing the purported burial of Adam (which is posited as the origin of several Islamic burial practices), but there is no intimation that this occurred in Mecca;[20] and the Qur'an and *Hadith*, read on their own, consistently provide an Abrahamic focus for Mecca's blessedness and the ritual significance of the Hajj.

The first Hajj (2): ninth- and tenth-century texts

The Abrahamic aspects of the Hajj remain a fixture in the tradition to the present day, but from the third/mid-ninth century, history books and Qur'an commentaries begin to report the story of the Hajj of Adam. There are some minor variations, but the story's framework according to historians such as al-Azraqi (d. 864), Ibn Qutayba (d. 885), al-Ya'qubi (d. 897–8) and al-Tabari (d. 923) is as follows.[21] After his fall from Paradise, Adam is said to have landed in the mountains in India. Dejected, Adam despaired his separation from God and the angels who circumambulate God's throne in worship. To console Adam, God instructed him to leave the mountains and journey to Mecca.

Why Mecca? Here, the historians explain that in their cosmology, Mecca is directly aligned under the throne of God, and the path around the Ka'ba is thus, spatially, the terrestrial equivalent of the angels' heavenly circumambulation of God's throne, and, spiritually, the centre of the world.

Upon arriving in Mecca, Adam, in imitation of the angels, performed the *tawaf* (circumambulation) and completed a Hajj under the direction of an angel who instructed him in some of its rituals. According to some texts, Mecca is also where Adam was reunited with Eve (she had landed near Jedda).[22] The historians continue the narrative, stating that Adam established a tent where the Ka'ba currently stands, and there he placed a heavenly ruby (foreshadowing Ibrahim's later placement of the Black Stone currently *in situ*).[23] Adam treated this space as an inviolable sanctuary (*haram*) in which the historians tell us only he could dwell and, where, in most versions, he spent the rest of his life. According to these sources, the first permanent *bayt* of the Ka'ba was erected by Adam's sons after his death.

In light of this story, ninth-century historians began to reinterpret Ibrahim's role in the Hajj. He was now cast as the rebuilder of Adam's Ka'ba which was said to have been washed away in the Great Flood.[24] The history of the Hajj was thus shifted backwards. Whereas the Qur'an portrays Muhammad as restorer of Ibrahim's Hajj and the *hadith*s call the foundations of the Ka'ba *qawa'id Ibrahim* (Ibrahim's

foundations), from the mid-ninth century, histories portray Ibrahim as merely a restorer and Adam assumed the mantle of the first *hajji* and the sanctuary's first inhabitant. Mecca's historical and theological significance was thus tracked backwards to the beginning of time, but this is manifestly at odds with the earlier Qur'anic and *Hadith* narratives.

The Hajj of Adam: sources and controversies

While extant texts referring to Adam's Hajj date only from the ninth century, the historians who recorded the story indicated through its *isnad* (chain of authorities) that it was told originally by early scholars such as Ibn 'Abbas (d. 687) and Mujahid (d. *c.* 718). If such attributions are correct, the story is almost as old as the Qur'an and *Hadith*, and its appearance in ninth-century texts would not indicate such a stark division in the community's conception of the first Hajj. Close examination of the historians' accounts of Adam's Hajj, however, reveals that the narrative style is markedly different from accounts of Ibrahim's Hajj. Specifically, the Ibrahim stories, even in later histories such as that of al-Tabari's,[25] are invariably cross-referenced with quotations from the Qur'an and *Hadith* whereas Adam's have no external corroboration – we read them as pure narration of the historians. Is it possible therefore that Adam's Hajj was inserted sometime between Muhammad's death and the mid-ninth century, and so indicates changing opinions on the early Hajj? The fact that the historians marshalled neither Qur'anic nor *Hadith* texts to corroborate the Adam story suggests this, and a survey of citations of Mecca and the first Hajj in ninth- and tenth-century literature indicate this may indeed have been the case.

Geographical considerations

In a celestial cosmology, the claim that Mecca lies on a blessed trajectory directly beneath the throne of God is a logical and undoubtedly convenient means to explain why God directed Adam to Mecca, to highlight the parallels between the *hajji*'s circumambulation of the Ka'ba and the angels' worship of God in the Highest Heaven, and also to underscore the significance of Mecca and the Hajj for contemporary pilgrims. In terms of the Muslim tradition, however, the imputing of such spatial significance to Mecca appears to originate from historians and exegetes, the tellers of *akhbar* (reports) who narrated stories of the Hajj of Adam. Early Muslim geographers, on the other hand, were slower to adopt this paradigm.

Of the early geographers, Ibn Khurdadhbih's (d. *c.* 912) *Al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik* plots a description of the world whereby Baghdad and the *Sawad* of Iraq (the arable land between the Tigris and Euphrates) are the central reference point. By Ibn Khurdadhbih's time, historians commonly cited the narrative of Adam's Hajj,[26] and Ibn Khurdadhbih briefly mentions it himself in his description of Mecca.[27] But Mecca is merely part of the 'Land of the South' (*Tayman*) in Ibn Khurdadhbih's worldview, whereas all regions of the world converge on Iraq: the lands of the east, west, south and north all seem to commence from the gates of the Abbasid imperial metropolis of Baghdad.[28] Not only is Iraq narrated as the centre of the world; it is also the first region Ibn Khurdadhbih describes. Politically, he identifies it as the heart of the Sasanian Persian Empire which justifies its elevated importance,[29] and 'scientifically', by using his contemporary technical terminology of the four elements (fire, earth, water and air) and states (hot, dry, cold and wet), Ibn Khurdadhbih explains that Iraq sits comfortably in the middle, the ideal, balanced location for habitation.[30] Al-Ya'qubi's geographical text *Kitab al-buldan* of the late ninth century also commences with Baghdad for reasons similar to those adduced by Ibn Khurdadhbih,[31] and another mathematical, neo-Ptolemaic approach to world mapping laid out by Sohrab in *'Aja'ib al-aqalim* also provides for Baghdad to fall in the precise centre.[32]

By the tenth century, however, in the geographies of al-Istakhri (d. 961), al-Muqaddasi (d. 988) and Ibn Hawqal (d. 990), we find Mecca and the Arabian Peninsula taking pole position. The presence of Mecca and the *qibla* (direction of prayer) in Arabia are cited as justification for its status as the world's most prestigious region,[33] and al-Muqaddasi adds that Mecca was the node from which the world 'protruded into shape' (*duhiyat*).[34] The geographical privilege of Arabia on account of Mecca's religious significance, and particularly the concept of Mecca's spatial importance as the nodal point of the world since Creation marries well with the cosmological and historical privilege of Mecca asserted by Muslim historians who portray it in the Adam stories as the first place of terrestrial worship, aligned underneath the throne of God. But geographical texts seem to have adopted this position relatively late – i.e. by the mid-tenth century, by which time historical texts had been narrating Mecca's centrality for about a century. Did the geographers take their lead from the historians? As a survey of a broader range of Arabic writings will reveal, the geographers do appear to have been responding to a wider-scale phenomenon in Muslim intellectual circles in which the Hajj of Adam suddenly emerges in the mid-ninth century and rapidly asserted its primacy, generating wide-scale ramifications for the position of Arabia in the Muslim consciousness.

Pre-Islamic Arabian history: ninth-century narratives

In terms of the history of the Hajj, the earliest extant books of pre-Islamic Arabian history, written in the first half of the ninth century, follow the Hajj narrative from the Qur'an and *Hadith*. Ibn Hisham's (d. 833) biography of the Prophet details Muhammad's genealogy from Adam and explores the religious history of pre-Islamic Mecca without making any mention of Adam's Hajj. Ibn Hisham also closely echoes the Abrahamic emphasis of the Hajj, referring to the foundations of the Ka'ba as *asas Ibrahim* (the foundation of Ibrahim; compare with *qawa'id Ibrahim* from the *Hadith*),[35] and he even calls the sanctuary itself *bayt Ibrahim*.[36]

Adam is similarly absent in Ibn Habib's (d. 859–60) *al-Munammaq* (a history of Mecca and the Quraysh tribe) and *al-Muhabbar* (a compendium of anecdotes largely about pre-Islamic Arabia). Ibn Habib's narratives are focused on reconstructing the history of Arabia and his discussion of the Hajj is centred on portraying it as the key pre-Islamic Arabian ritual. Hence, Ibn Habib relates various memories of the 'pagan' Hajj and even an account of a soothsayer who

inhabited the Ka'ba.[37] He mentions Arabian ritual sites which appear as 'pseudo-Ka'bas' to which Hajj-like pilgrimages were reportedly made,[38] but to highlight the primacy of Mecca's Ka'ba, Ibn Habib calls it *bayt Allah* (God's [sacred] House).[39] He also relates an anecdote in which the Ka'ba is called *bayt al-'Arab* (the [sacred] House of the Arabs). This unusual name may be explainable in light of Ibn Habib's emphasis on portraying the Hajj as the primary festival of the pre-Islamic Arabs.[40]

Given his focus on Mecca's pagan Arab history immediately before the Islamic period, Ibn Habib rarely comments on the more ancient origins of the Hajj, but when he does, he returns to the Abrahamic narrative. For example, when listing the ritual locations of the pre-Islamic Hajj, Ibn Habib notes that they were ordained by Ibrahim, and that Quraysh – the powerful Meccan tribe from which Muhammad hailed – acknowledged their Abrahamic origins.[41] Ibn Habib, in short, narrates the pre-Islamic Hajj as an Abrahamic ritual partially corrupted by paganism and in need of restoration, once again paralleling the Qur'anic conception of the history of Hajj.[42]

Ibn Hisham's and Ibn Habib's works with their Abrahamic conception of the origins of the Hajj are curiously silent on the Hajj of Adam which appears in the histories of al-Ya'qubi and al-Tabari written only a generation or two later. In accounting for this silence, two relevant factors are immediately apparent to distinguish Ibn Hisham and Ibn Habib from the later historians. The earlier writers date from the first half of the ninth century, and their histories revolved around Arabia and Muhammad's prophethood. The later historians, on the other hand, wrote after the mid-ninth century and their books set out to narrate universal histories of the world. Adam's Hajj thus appears to have become in vogue some fifty years after Ibn Hisham and was endorsed by writers whose horizons of historical enquiry expanded beyond Arabia and Muhammad's lifetime, engaging broader visions of world history. We shall consider the ramifications of these differing motivations below, but first we shall explore the source material from which the later historians constructed Adam's Hajj.

Adam's Hajj: first stories, weak *isnads*

We cannot determine for how long anecdotes of Adam's Hajj circulated before al-Tabari and likeminded historians recorded them, but even if they did exist in the early ninth century, the stories provoke questions of authenticity which may have negatively impinged upon their initial scholarly reception. These issues emerge at the point of the narrative's first iterations in two histories of Mecca written by al-Azraqi and al-Fakihi in the mid-ninth century.

Al-Azraqi provides a historical survey of Mecca's history from Creation to the early Umayyad period in which Adam's Hajj and details of his life in Mecca are reported on the authority of the seventh-century Muslim narrators Ibn 'Abbas and Wahb ibn Munabbih,[43] with additional anecdotes from their contemporary Ka'b al-Ahbar.[44] All three narrators are frequently associated with fanciful or unusual historical anecdotes doubted by modern scholars who argue that later Muslim historians concocted such anecdotes and falsely attributed them to the earlier narrators in an attempt to bestow 'ancient authority' on their forgeries. But not all stories attributed to Ibn 'Abbas and others are later counterfeits: genuinely old narratives are mixed with false attributions and the extant texts attributed to these ancient historians are a perplexing jumble. From our perspective of textual analysis, we can infer that al-Azraqi, by narrating the stories of Adam's Hajj at the outset of his book, and by expressly attributing the stories to old narrators, intended to make the case for their authenticity to persuade his readers to accept them. Whether his readers were initially convinced of the historicity of Adam's Hajj, however, is another matter, and evidence from al-Fakihi's contemporary text about Mecca demonstrates that competing narratives existed with apparently better authority.

Parts of al-Fakihi's text have been lost, including the narrative chapters on Mecca's history, but notwithstanding the losses, his book is still larger than al-Azraqi's and his tastes appear more catholic: al-Fakihi records an encyclopaedic array of sometimes contradictory anecdotes which paint a varied picture of how Muslims in the ninth century remembered the history of the Hajj.

Amongst the thousands of preserved anecdotes, Adam's Hajj is mentioned by al-Fakihi, although the nature of its recording requires close analysis. In a chapter dedicated to 'the first occurrences' of events in Mecca, Adam is mentioned six times: he was the first resident of Mecca and the first to be buried there.[45] This list also includes curious claims: al-Fakihi relates anecdotes describing Adam as the first man to mint coins in Mecca and also the first to call for a doctor there.[46] The *isnad*s for these latter anecdotes are extremely weak according to the standards of critical analysis developed by Muslim scholars to ascertain the quality of historical reports.[47] This introduces a pattern in al-Fakihi's work: the anecdotes he cites which mention Adam are either expressly doubted by al-Fakihi himself or related with questionable *isnad*s. This contrasts other accounts in al-Fakihi's text which stand up to the most rigorous *isnad* criticism.

Hence, al-Fakihi reports that '[t]he first to make the *tawaf* was Adam (peace be upon him); but contrarily, it is said the angels [were]',[48] and so through his editorial comment, he casts doubt on the precise origins of the Hajj. Furthermore, in discussing the first Hajj, al-Fakihi relates one anecdote in which it is linked to Adam, though its *isnad* is *matruk* (reprobate),[49] whereas in the next anecdote he reports that the Hajj was started by Ibrahim and interprets the term Maqam Ibrahim from the Qur'an to mean 'the whole Hajj'.[50] The *isnad* of this 'Abrahamic' anecdote is rated *sahih*, the highest standard of authority amongst Muslim scholars. In the succeeding pages, al-Fakihi relates more anecdotes suggestive of the Abrahamic origins of Hajj, including the statement, 'Everyone who makes the Hajj is responding to the call of Ibrahim'.[51] Similarly, when reporting the origin of the Black Stone, only three anecdotes (out of 34 in this section) report Adam's placement of the stone (or ruby) in the Ka'ba, and two of them are *da'if* (weak).

Al-Fakihi's writing style is common in ninth-century Arabic literature. Authors related an encyclopaedic array of anecdotes, both authentic and dubious, to produce a

'warts and all' version of history that expresses sometimes contradictory opinions. Authors generally leave the reader free to interpret the evidence, and when authors do guide their readers, they employ subtle methods. To help readers discern the truthful from the doubtful, authors rarely express their own opinion outright, but they commonly repeat their 'preferred version' more times and with 'stronger' *isnad*s – in other words, anecdotes that would stand up better to the contemporary standards of anecdotal criticism. In the case of al-Fakihi's Hajj anecdotes, the repetition and authenticity are with the Ibrahim stories. Al-Fakihi would, thus, seemingly suggest that the Abrahamic perception of the origin of Hajj was more accurate and more commonly held by authoritative scholars than the 'Adamic' perception which was evidently present, but was supported by what would have been recognized as weaker authority according to contemporary standards.

Additionally, al-Fakihi gives an interesting insight into the traditions surrounding the origin of the names 'Arafa and al-Muzdalifa, two ritual locations of the Hajj, which in later literature are usually associated with Adam's Hajj and his reunion with Eve in Mecca.[52] Al-Fakihi does not relate anecdotes connecting Adam to 'Arafa and instead offers four stories with strong or even *sahih isnad*s that unambiguously demonstrate its Abrahamic ritual origins.[53] Regarding al-Muzdalifa, al-Fakihi writes what may be his own opinion that 'al-Muzdalifa only received its name on account of the gathering (*muzdalif*) of people around it', effectively casting doubt on the subsequent anecdote he relates that links al-Muzdalifa to Adam which additionally has a weak *isnad*.[54] Thus, contrary to later accounts, the material and structure of al-Fakihi's sections on 'Arafa and al-Muzdalifa mitigate against the opinion that Adam visited them.

Al-Fakihi's compendium therefore illuminates an array of varied opinions surrounding Mecca's early history, mentioning both Adam and Ibrahim, though the manner in which al-Fakihi relates his material seems to favour the Abrahamic connections. His text does, however, shed light on the early genesis of the Adam anecdotes which, from their roots with seemingly weak authority, would over the next two generations vie with the Abrahamic version to settle a 'canonical' account of the origin of Hajj.

Ninth-century debate: 'Ibrahimists' versus 'Eternalists'?

If the stories of Adam's Hajj represented an inauthentic explanation for the origin of the Hajj, we should expect that mid-ninth century scholars would object and argue for the Abrahamic narrative. Luckily, surviving texts from the period preserve traces of debate over the historicity of Adam's Hajj as opposed to Ibrahim's, but the weight of opinion and the eventual outcome of the debate at the outset of the tenth century turned in favour of Adam.

Al-Jahiz (d. 869) informs us that scholars had become partisan to one of two camps: those who believed Mecca's sacred status began with Ibrahim, and those who asserted that Mecca's sanctity was eternal, even predating Adam. The 'Eternalists', with whom al-Jahiz sided, argued that the sacrosanctity of Mecca's Haram was a miraculous natural phenomenon that transcended any human agency. Animals cease hunting in the Haram, birds will not fly over it and the relative fecundity of rains in Syria and Iraq can be predicted by observing rain over the Ka'ba.[55] Al-Jahiz accepted that Muhammad's decree rendered Medina a sanctuary (which resulted in the formerly foul-smelling location miraculously adopting a sweet scent),[56] but he considered the sacredness of Mecca of a different order, not commensurate with the mere human act of Ibrahim's blessing. Hence, al-Jahiz argued that Mecca must have been a sanctuary since the beginning of time. According to al-Jahiz's text, the arguments about Mecca's eternal sanctity referred to the Qur'an's description of Mecca as '*al-bayt al-'atiq*'.[57] '*Atiq* can mean 'ancient' but also 'free/autonomous', and al-Jahiz argues that the verse describes the sanctuary (*al-bayt*) as divinely protected from earthly authority – an eternal sanctity from God not inaugurated by Ibrahim.[58] Al-Jahiz mentions the opposing group of scholars would treat '*'atiq*' differently to maintain that Mecca's Haram began with Ibrahim.[59]

Moving ahead to the very end of the ninth century, al-Tabari's commentary on the Qur'an reports the same debate between 'Ibrahimists' and 'Eternalists' over the meaning of '*al-bayt al-'atiq*'.[60] He also relates a similar debate over the interpretation of the Qur'anic phrase 'Maqam Ibrahim'. [61] According to al-Tabari, one group of scholars interpreted the 'Maqam' as meaning the whole Hajj.[62] These were the 'Ibrahimists' – they maintained that Ibrahim was the original *hajji* and that the verse implies the entire Hajj originated with Ibrahim's action in Mecca. On the other hand, al-Tabari and a group of scholars he cites in support argued that the 'Maqam' should only be read to mean one specific place of prayer in Mecca and not the entire Hajj ritual.[63] Their interpretation portrays the Hajj as something greater which predates Ibrahim.

Al-Tabari's evidence to support the 'Eternalist camp' included Adam's Hajj. According to al-Tabari, the fact that Adam made a Hajj proves that Mecca's holiness was older than Ibrahim. Remarkably, and demonstrating an apparent change in the tenor of the debate since al-Jahiz's day, al-Tabari even went so far as to call the 'Ibrahimists' *juhhal* (ignorants), extremely strong censure from the usually sober scholar, and demonstrating his avid partisanship to the 'Eternalist' argument in what had apparently become an acerbic debate.[64] The contempt al-Tabari expresses for the Ibrahimists may harbinger the eclipse of this discourse in later writings as the Eternalist narratives of Adam's Hajj became dominant from the tenth century onwards.

The shift from Abrahamic to Eternalist conceptions of Mecca was significant. Breaking through the Qur'anic historical horizon of the Hajj, later Muslim historians rendered Mecca a timeless sanctuary. As witness to this, al-Jahiz's inference of timeless holiness became a fact asserted with empirical statements: al-Tabari reports the rock of the Ka'ba floated on the primordial soup before the world was created.[65] The story of Adam's Hajj clearly reinforces the Eternalist discourse by unequivocally demonstrating that the first act of human history on earth was a Hajj. Mecca is no longer portrayed as the House of Ibrahim, but rather *bayt Allah*, the House of God alone (a sobriquet noted, but not dominant in earlier narratives),[66]



Plate 3 Alexander visits the Ka'ba, from the *Shahnama* of Firdausi, mid-16th century. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art (MSS 771) (© Nour Foundation. Courtesy of the Khalili Family Trust)

possessing eternal sanctity and cosmological spatial holiness lying directly under God's throne. God's order that Adam perform the Hajj is an integral part in establishing a portrayal of the Hajj as a universal expression of monotheism.

Therefore, we have seen that whilst the origin of the stories of Adam's Hajj, according to the traditional methods of *isnad* criticism, lies on weaker premises, within fifty years of al-Fakihi's compendium Muslim scholars had come to embrace it and even chastise those who would deny it. The veritable paradigm shift can perhaps be understood in the context of changing audiences in the Muslim world. Muhammad led a community where guidance was expressed through the person of the Prophet. The close association of the Hajj with Ibrahim, a prophet himself, would emphasize and justify the ritual's importance: the Hajj was portrayed as Ibrahim's personal guidance to monotheists. But over the succeeding 150 years, Islam expanded and large numbers of new peoples in far-flung places entered the community. At this time, the historical horizons of Muslim writers commensurately broadened, and by the ninth century, they began to write universal histories of the world. No longer strictly a prophetic community, and possessing a much broader historical consciousness, the more diverse audiences of later historians would appreciate narratives of Adam's Hajj as they bestowed timelessness to the Hajj and affirm Mecca's global importance, and so cogently answer the question 'why do we make the Hajj?' for a wider audience.

Hajj before Muhammad and the 'rise' of Mecca

The establishment of Mecca's timeless sanctity paved the way for a proliferation of Hajj narratives. Firstly, historians began to ascribe the performance of Hajj to most if not all prophets,[67] even Noah is said to have performed a kind of Hajj during the Flood when his Ark circumambulated the waters over the Ka'ba seven times.[68] The ancient 'Arab' prophets Hud and Salih are also said to have sought refuge in Mecca after their communities, which did not heed their warnings of God's punishment, were destroyed.[69] Secondly, and more profoundly, this conception of Mecca fundamentally coloured Muslim accounts of pre-Islamic history. Mecca became an eternal beacon of virtue in the mental map of Arabia in the *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic times), and the journey to Mecca became an act *de rigueur* for praiseworthy figures in narratives of pre-Islamic history.[70]

Hence many communities in the Muslim Empire incorporated Mecca and the Hajj into their own pre-Islamic history. Sasan, ancestor of the Sasanian Persian dynasty, was said to have sent gifts to the Ka'ba,[71] and the Muslim portrayal of Alexander the Great reportedly included him performing a Hajj (**Pl. 3**).[72] Yemeni historians ascribed Hajj performances and other interactions with Mecca to their mythical kings, the *Tababi'a*, and one was even credited with inaugurating the now traditional rituals of adorning the Ka'ba in cloth (*kiswa*) and making a feast for the pilgrims.[73] The Hajj also became a regular activity in the stories of pre-Islamic Arabian folkloric heroes.[74]

A factually minded critic may question the widespread reference to the Hajj before Muhammad, but for our purposes, as students of the stories of Muslim historiography, the pre-Islamic Hajj is a prominent and very real phenomenon in our source texts. Somewhat analogous to Mecca's spatial position as the focal point of prayer and pilgrimage, Mecca acquired a similar literary gravitational pull, attracting the limelight in stories of pre-Islamic history. 'Literary Mecca' became the symbolic centre of both monotheism *and* the Arab world, as narratives of pre-Islamic prophets and pre-Islamic Arabian history came to revolve around it. Mecca thereby provided a link between Arabs and the worship of Allah long pre-dating Muhammad and the Qur'an. The narrative that the Arabs spread over all of Arabia and thence, via the Islamic conquests, into the Near East was also portrayed as starting from Mecca.

Stories of pre-Islamic Mecca thus come to serve a dual purpose for Muslim narrators: on the one hand, Mecca's role as a spiritual centre provided a means for different communities to establish praiseworthy credentials for indigenous heroes such as the Persian Sasan. And secondly, Mecca's role as a central Arab homeland permitted narrators to assert 'authentic' Arab credentials for their past heroes via Hajj stories, for instance the frequent interaction between pre-Islamic Yemeni kings and Mecca allowed Yemeni historians to fully integrate their pre-Islamic history in an Arabian guise.

Adam's Hajj thus did much more than posit a starting point for the pilgrimage and justify the ritual in Islam. It facilitated a major orientation of pre-Islamic history portraying Mecca as the nodal point of the Arab people, and indeed world history, channelling the attention of Muslim scholars of pre-Islamic history to Mecca. Muhammad's origin was thus spatially aligned with the origin of the world, and temporally aligned with world history: in the Muslim narratives Mecca became the site of the first act of history (Adam's Hajj) and also the most important act of history (the beginning of Muhammad's mission). Accordingly, Mecca's footprint in the memory of pre-Islamic times was vastly increased to provide a bedrock upon which Muslim historians would reconstruct the history of the Arabs. From *asas Ibrahim* (the foundation of Ibrahim), Mecca became *asas al-'Arab* (the foundation of the Arabs) and profoundly coloured the telling of Arabian history.

Notes

1 Research on this topic is vast and varied; some even deny that Mecca was Islam's original cult centre (originally in Crone 1987, and repeated very recently in Holland 2012: 328–31). Hawting 2004: xvii, xxi–xxiii), Lazarus-Yafeh 1981; Peters 1994a: 10–54, 1994b: 5–19 summarize the panoply of scholarship on the Hajj's origins and precedents.

2 The *Hadith*'s authenticity is hotly debated. Schacht's classic deconstruction in *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* is counterbalanced by Azami's defence in *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*. It is perhaps imprudent to assert that a given *hadith* records the Prophet's speech verbatim, but many are of considerable antiquity and do represent some of the earliest records of the Muslim community, if not from the time of the Prophet, at least from the first few generations (Motzki 1991).

3 Pre-Islamic poetry includes references to Mecca and the Hajj primarily preserved in the ninth-century histories of Mecca and the Quraysh tribe. The authenticity of these is doubtful, and my preliminary survey of the better established 'canonical' collections of pre-Islamic verse compiled in the eighth to ninth centuries (*al-Mufaddaliyyat, al-Asma'iyyat, al-Hamasa*) revealed no citations of the Hajj. The complex question of poetry and Hajj history requires lengthy analysis outside the scope of this essay.

4 Adam's Hajj is thoroughly endorsed by al-Tabari (1990, I: 745–56, *Tarikh* [n. d.], I: 121–36), and repeated thereafter. See al-Qurtubi 2000, II: 81; Ibn Kathir [n.d.], I: 85; Ibn al-Jawzi 1995, I: 105.

5 It has been suggested that '*al-bayt*' does not mean the Ka'ba as assumed by later Muslim exegetes (Hawting 2001, III: 79), but the clusters of verses describing *al-bayt* do have a lexical unity with words associated with Hajj and Mecca such as *Hajj*, *Maqam Ibrahim*, *Bakka*, *Masjid al-Haram* and *Bayt al-Haram* (Q.2:124–8, 3:95–7, 5:97, 7:34–5, 22:25–9). Even without recourse to later exegesis, an application of the verses to interpret each other strongly suggests that pilgrimage to Mecca is intended.

6 The text reads 'Bakka' instead of 'Mecca'. All Muslim exegetes affirm that the Qur'an's Bakka is one and the same as Mecca, explaining that Bakka is a nickname for Mecca derived from a verb connoting a crush (caused by pilgrims gathering). The letters 'b' and 'm' also can be interchangeable in Arabic speech, for instance '*bayda anna*' and '*mayda anna*', both connoting 'however'; or *lazib* and *lazim* meaning 'necessary' (see Ibn Manzur 1990, I: 738).

7 See note 2.

8 Al-Tirmidhi 1999: *al-hajj* 53; Sulayman 1999: *al-manasik* 62.

9 Al-Bukhari 1999: *al-hajj* 42.

10 Al-Bukhari 1999: *al-anbiya'* 9; Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj 1999: *al-hajj* 398.

11 The reports describe the pictures as being of either Ibrahim and Isma'il or Ibrahim and Maryam (Mary), see Sulayman 1999: *al-Manaqib* 92; al-Bukhari 1999: *al-hajj* 54, and Ibn Hanbal 1993, I: 362.

12 Ibn Majah 1999: *Manasik* 104.

13 Ibn Hanbal 1993, I: 414.

14 This *hadith* is frequently cited, see al-Bukhari 1999: *al-Madina* 1, *al-anbiya'* 10; Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj 1999: *al-hajj* 445–6, 458; Sulayman 1999: *al-manasik* 96; al-Nasa'i 1999*: al-hajj* 11, 111, 120.

15 Sergeant 1962: 42, 52–3.

16 The close parallels between Ibrahim and Muhammad are reflected in many aspects of Muslim ritual texts and practices, for instance, in prayer Muslims invoke blessing on both prophets together.

17 Al-Bukhari 1999: *al-hajj* 43, al-Tirmidhi 1999: *al-hajj* 1; Ibn Majah 1999: *al-manasik* 103.

18 Al-Bukhari 1999: *al-anbiya'* 9, *Jaza' al-Sayd* 27.

19 Al-Bukhari 1999: *al-anbiya'* 9.

20 Ibn Hanbal 1993, V: 136.

21 The following account is based on al-Azraqi 1983, I: 43–51, al-Ya'qubi [n.d.], I: 5–7 and al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 121–36. Their narratives are remarkably consistent, differing only in minor details, such as the precise mountain upon which Adam landed (al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 121–2), the exact nature of the Hajj rituals he performed (al-Azraqi 1983, I: 43–6) and the number of pilgrimages he performed (al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 124–5).

22 Al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 121–2.

23 Some sources omit mention of the ruby and state that Adam himself placed the Black Stone (which shone white at the time) in the sacred precinct (al-Azraqi 1983, I: 328).

24 For the flood, see, for example al-Azraqi 1983, I: 50–2 and al-Tabari 1999, I: 752.

25 Al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 251–62.

26 Among the writers of history during the late ninth century, it appears that only al-Dinawari's *Akhbar al-tiwal* omits narration of the Hajj of Adam.

27 Ibn Khurdadhbih [n.d.]: 133.

28 Ibn Khurdadhbih [n.d.]: 18, 72, where each of the Lands of the East and West are traced via a route from Baghdad.

29 Ibn Khurdadhbih [n.d.]: 5.

30 Ibn Khurdadhbih [n.d.]: 158.

31 Al-Ya'qubi 1892: 233–4.

32 Sohrab 1930: 30.

33 Ibn Hawqal [n.d.]: 18.

34 Al-Muqaddasi 1906: 67. A view earlier noted in al-Azraqi's history of Mecca (I: 31–2).

35 Ibn Hisham 1936, I: 195.

36 Ibn Hisham 1936, I: 28, 48, 199. The term '*Bayt Allah'* (The House of God) which conjures images of more eternal sanctity does occur, but less frequently, see Ibn Hisham 1936, I: 196.

37 Ibn Habib 1942: 156–7, 178–81, 311–15.

38 Ibn Habib 1942: 315–19.

39 Ibn Habib 1985: 25–6.

40 Ibn Habib 1985: 74.

41 Ibn Habib 1985: 126.

42 The Qur'an expressly chastises the corrupted Hajj of the pagan Meccans (Q.8:35).

43 Al-Azraqi 1983, I: 36–47.

44 Al-Azraqi 1983, I: 40.

45 Al-Fakihi 1994, III: 208, 223.

46 Al-Fakihi 1994, III: 208, 227–8.

47 The coins anecdote is described as '*da'if jiddan*' (very weak), while the doctor story is described as '*mursal*' – an anecdote with gaps in the chain of transmission (al-Fakihi 1994, III: 227–8).

48 Al-Fakihi 1994, III: 219.

49 Al-Fakihi 1994, II: 444.

50 Al-Fakihi 1994, II: 445.

51 Al-Fakihi 1994, II: 446–7.

52 Al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 121–2. He relates 'Arafa was so named as Adam found Eve there, associating the name with the verb '*arafa* (to know) and al-Muzdalifa was named because both Adam and Eve went there, an association with the verb *izdalafa* (to gather).

53 Al-Fakihi 1994, V: 9–10.

54 Al-Fakihi 1994, IV: 312.

55 Al-Jahiz 1998, II: 72–4.

56 Al-Jahiz 1998, II: 74.

57 Q.22:29.

58 He argues linguistically that the Qur'an's placement of the definite article on '*al-bayt'* demands the 'Eternalist' interpretation (al-Jahiz 1963–79, IV: 119).

59 Al-Jahiz 1963–79, IV: 120.
60 Al-Tabari 1999, XVII: 199–200.
61 Q.1:125. Al-Tabari 1999, I: 745–8.
62 Al-Tabari 1999, I: 745–6, a view which al-Fakihi reported along with robust *isnads* (1994, 2: 445).
63 Al-Tabari 1999, I: 747–8.
64 Al-Tabari 1999, I: 756. For his argument leading to this statement, see I: 754–6.
65 Al-Tabari 1999, I: 761.
66 For instance, it is only cited twice in al-Bukhari. See notes 19 and 40.
67 Al-Tabari 1999, I: 760. Al-Azraqi notes that 70 prophets have performed the Hajj, and records different prophets' *talbiyya* (the saying Pilgrims make on Hajj) (al-Azraqi 1983, I: 73). See also al-Azraqi 1983, I: 53 for the Hajj of Angels before even the Prophets.
68 Al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 185.
69 For Hud, see Ibn Qutayba 1958: 28; for Salih, see al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 232.
70 See the story of the sage Luqman and the 'Delegation of 'Ad' who reportedly journeyed to Mecca many centuries before Muhammad to pray for rain (al-Tabari [n.d.], I: 219–22). The Ghassanids and Lakhmids, pre-Islamic Arab kings of Syria and Iraq respectively, were also ascribed the performing of Hajj (al-Jahiz 1963–79, IV: 120).
71 Al-Mas'udi 1966: §575.
72 Al-Dinawari 2001: 75. Alexander's Hajj was often reported and even illustrated in subsequent centuries.
73 Al-Khuza'i (d. *c.* 760) may be the earliest reference to King Tubba' al-Akbar's Hajj, his seven-time circumambulation of the Ka'ba and slaughter of the *budn* (fat animals for feeding the poor) (53). For variations in later Yemeni histories see the pseudo Wahb ibn Munabbih's *al-Tijan* (1997, 139, 142) and Nashwan al-Himyari 1985: 161. For narratives of three Yemeni 'Tubba'' kings and the Hajj, see also al-Azraqi 1983, I: 132–4.
74 E.g. the many examples of 'Arab kings' performing Hajj in al-'Absi, *Sirat 'Antara* [n.d.], I: 64, 91.